



The Honorable
Christopher A. Hart
Vice Chairman

Outline

- NTSB Basics
- Investigation Process
- Major Railroad Issues



What the NTSB Does

- Independent federal agency that investigates transportation accidents and incidents, all modes
 - Aviation
 - Highway
 - Rail
 - Marine (NTSB or Coast Guard)
 - Pipeline
- Determine probable cause(s) and make recommendations to prevent recurrences
 - Do not determine blame or liability



Other NTSB Activities

- Conduct special studies and investigations
 - Review troubling trends
 - Make recommendations to address trends
- Assist victims and their families
 - Extensive assistance, first few days
 - Longer term, further assistance upon request



Independent

- 5 Members
 - Nominated by President, confirmed by Senate
- Political independence
 - Political party balance
 - Member terms are fixed and staggered
 - Requirement for relevant background, expertise
 - Purpose: Conclusions from facts, not politics
- Functional Independence
 - Not a regulator or operator
 - Purpose: Impartial and unbiased investigations



Purpose

- Single focus is *SAFETY*
- Primary product:
Safety recommendations
- Not a regulator, can only recommend
- Recommendation recipients are not required to implement recommendations



Recommendations

- Safety recommendations are issued to any organization that has authority to address the problem, including operators, manufacturers, regulators (U.S. and foreign), labor unions, trade associations, and state and local governments
- Response to recommendations:
 - > 80% acceptable



Exception: Criminal

- NTSB generally has investigative priority
- If accident “may have been caused by an intentional criminal act,” FBI may take over
- NTSB then provides technical support upon request
- Help as needed, while being careful not to be perceived as criminal investigator



Investigation Process: Facts

- NTSB relies extensively on *PARTIES* to help develop the facts
 - Carrier/Operator
 - Manufacturers
 - Unions
 - Regulator
 - Others who may have been involved
- Parties are selected for technical expertise
 - Excludes plaintiffs, attorneys, insurers



Investigation: Analysis

- Once the facts are developed, NTSB conducts the analysis *without* parties
- NTSB's neutrality is important for an unbiased and impartial analysis
- NTSB invites anyone, including parties, to submit their own analysis into the public docket



Obligations of Parties

- Contribute their technical expertise to the investigation
- Share information with the other parties
- Avoid talking to media about the accident



Information to the Public

- Objective: Transparency to the public of the facts and the investigative process
- Factual information is placed in the public docket
- Sunshine Act requires Board deliberations to be public
- Final NTSB accident report is not admissible in court



Major Railroad Issues

- Positive Train Control
- Safety Management Systems
- Fatigue
- Distraction



Thank You

Questions?



National Transportation Safety Board